Telehealth 101: A Primer for Behavioral Health Providers

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Appreciation

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Agenda
- Why Telehealth?
- Efficacy of Treatment via Telehealth
- License, Regulatory, and Privacy Considerations
- Telehealth Appropriate Care
- Telehealth with Children & Adolescents
- Emergency Procedures
- Set Up and Preparation
- Navigating the Clinical Encounter

Why Telehealth?

- Preserving public health
- Reduce barriers to treatment
  - Travel, childcare, transportation, time off from work, privacy, comfort, stigma, severity and nature of symptoms
- Increase provider efficiency across locations/treatment settings
- Increase flexibility for patient and provider
- Cost savings
- Continuation of care in times of illness, crisis, pandemic, quarantine
- Reduce provider burn out
Effectiveness of Telemental Health

- A 2013 literature review found that telemental health was effective for assessment and diagnosis across multiple populations (adult, geriatric, child/adolescent, and various ethnic groups)
- Telemental Health Research Catalog- Center for Connected Health Policy
  - 2018 compilation and review of telemental health studies published in peer reviewed journals
    - Improved access to treatment
    - Cost effectiveness of telemedicine-based collaborative care for depression
    - Efficacy of psychotherapy via telehealth for underserved and older adults
    - Satisfaction in veteran population with decreased travel time and travel costs, fewer crowds associated with treatment via telehealth
    - Effective deployment of treatment programs for PTSD, ADHD, anger management, parent guidance delivered via technology

   2. https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/evidence

The Future of Telehealth: Virtual Visits Will Eclipse In- Person Visits

Key Telehealth Tasks

• Connection - technological and interpersonal
• Engagement - therapist and client(s) throughout sessions
• Movement – therapeutic progress
• Adaptation – as needed to accommodate this altered venue.

Privacy, Security, Licensing, Regulations

• Familiarize yourself with the telehealth standards of your state's licensing board, professional organizations, etc
• Provider must be licensed to practice in the state that the patient is located in at the time of each visit; no restrictions on provider’s location
• Utilize technology that is HIPAA compliant: Doxy.me, Zoom
• Contain all communications, documentation, etc. to existing private, secure, and HIPAA compliant formats
  – Maintain professional vigilance when working from homeDo not save PHI to personal devices
• Adhere to all standards, requirements, and recommendations made by the IT teams at your place of work!
Telehealth Appropriate Care

- Telehealth appropriate conditions “Green light”
  - Conditions where traditional talk therapy is recommended
  - Conditions within scope of practice of clinician competence
- Some care cannot be provided by Telehealth—“Red light”
  - Inability and/or unwillingness to reliably utilize required technology
  - Current suicidality/homicidality/psychosis
  - High need for crisis/non-appointment care
  - Need for medical intervention (i.e. medical detox)
- First visit as a triage visit - Make appropriate referrals if necessary

Telehealth with Children & Adolescents

- Approximate recommendation of ages 10+
  - Younger may find it more difficult to engage in 45 minutes to face to face conversation
- Most important factor is the individual child’s presentation and the clinician’s ability to engage the child effectively in a telehealth setting, no matter what the age
- Incorporate elements of play that may not need physical interaction
  - Stories
  - Word and language games
- Tap into child/adolescent’s innate or specific comfort and interest in technology
## Components of an Emergency Procedure

1. Start each session by confirming patient’s current physical location and address
2. Maintain list of local crisis resources and have available to reference at all times
3. Assessment of the patient
4. Assess what resources (family or friend) may be available at the patient’s location to involve in safety planning
5. Address the plan with patient and/or caregiver
6. Initiate transportation plan while keeping contact with the patient (maintain video connection with patient while calling emergency responders from cell phone; stay on phone with patient while calling 911 from a landline)
7. Initiate any crisis management when waiting for assistance
8. Follow up with family member, patient, or primary MD as appropriate within 24-48 hours
9. Follow up with any appropriate internal contact points (clinical leadership, supervisor, quality management)

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### The Importance of Preparation, Clinical Presence, and Rapport with Patients in Effective Telehealth
Preparing for a Visit - Technology

• Practice with a colleague to become familiar with the technology
• Check your own technology for readiness before starting each patient encounter
  – Even when doing multiple patient encounters in one setting, it can be important to continuously check your audio, visual, and internet connection
• Using earbuds with mic may help your own audio
  • Your computer audio picks up a great deal of background noise, be aware of noise from typing, mouse clicks, etc

Preparing for a Visit - Environment

• Be sure your setting is patient-ready
  – Clean, uncluttered, professional background
  – Examine your space from the perspective of a client, even small changes can help convey professionalism
  – During test visits, pay attention to what is in the patient’s field of vision and adjust accordingly
• Lighting is important
  – The primary light source should be in front of your face
  – Avoid any backlighting from windows or overhead lights
• White noise machine, Do Not Disturb signs, and locks on doors all protect the privacy of the session
Preparing for a Visit- Appearance

- Dress as you would for any professional encounter in an office setting
  - It is always possible that you may have reason to stand at some point during any visit- dress professionally from head to ankle!
- Be cognizant of eye contact: Direct eye contact is conveyed by looking into the webcam, and not at the screen
  - While you do not necessarily have to stare directly at the camera throughout the entire session, be aware of how you are appearing as you look at various areas of your screen
- No Pets! No Children! No interruptions!

Connection: Starting the Visit

- Ease patients into the visit- this may be their first experience with telehealth
  - Warmly greet the patient
  - Introduce yourself and state your credentials/title/role
  - Confirm patient’s exact physical location at the start of every visit (document current address in case of emergency and ensure they are currently located in a state in which you hold a license to practice)
  - Confirm the patient can see and hear you
Starting the Visit (2)

• Inform client that you are alone...and mention means you are using to ensure privacy (locked door...sign on door...white noise machine).
• Answer any questions about the telehealth technology
• Plan for anticipated interruptions
• Inform patients of anything you do offscreen or out of their field of vision
  – Taking notes
  – Grabbing a book to reference
  – Looking up resources on a separate internet tab

Starting the Visit (3)

• Telehealth requires a specialized consent...noting specific benefits and risks.
• Check with your professional association, insurers, state regulatory bodies
Client Engagement: Webside Manner

- Empathize, as always, and use your usual rapport-building skills.
- Explain more about what you are thinking and feeling; ask the client to do the same.
  - Non-verbal communication is less distinct
  - Anticipate that you will be explaining and asking
- Supports patient compliance with treatment plan

In Session: Movement as Usual!

- Most patients and providers feel that the technology ‘fades away’ a few minutes into the session. Having confidence in yourself and your modality of care delivery will ensure that your usual clinical expertise and skills will shine through no matter how you connect with your patient!
- Move, therapeutically, as you do in in-person sessions. Use the same therapeutic techniques, sometimes adapted:
  - Therapeutic activities
  - Therapeutic materials
Ending the Session

- Create plan for next steps and schedule follow-up
- Review treatment plan and safety plan
- Check in re: usefulness and tone of telehealth venue
- Invite the patient to be the one to “end” the session (hang up or sign off). This allows them to feel a sense of control and ensures they aren’t inadvertently cut off.

Charting

- Note that session is via telehealth
- Note reason for telehealth session (e.g., patient preference; protect medical safety due to Covid-19)
- Note location of client
- Note if there were any interruptions at either location
Policies and Regulations

- These are rapidly changing
- Check with...
  - Professional associations: APA, ACA, NASP, others
  - SAMHSA
  - Medicaid and Medicare
  - State Licensing Boards
  - State MH/BH Regulations
  - Insurance Companies

COVID-19 and Mental Health: In each session, check in...

- Anxiety and worry about the coronavirus itself
  - Fear, confusion...overwhelmed with information at rapid pace
- Caring for those who are ill
  - Caring for those who are grieving
- Changes in work, school
- Changes in family structure and interactions
- Financial changes
Resource

• Additional information and resources, including specific steps on initiating and conducting telehealth sessions:

https://www.williamjames.edu/about/welcome/telemental-health-resources.cfm

Thank you!